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Submitted electronically to LABTestimony@cga.ct.gov

Re: Testimony supporting S.B. 312: *An Act Concerning the Expansion of Connecticut Paid Sick Days*

Dear Members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly:

Family Values @ Work appreciates the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of S.B. 312: *An Act Concerning the Expansion of Connecticut Paid Sick Days*.

Family Values @ Work (FV@W) grew out of the recognition that valuing caregiving and enabling people to be good providers and good family members is key to achieving racial, gender and economic equity. FV@W supports grassroots organizations in 27 states, including Connecticut, as a recognized leader with significant experience fostering grassroots coalitions and policy change in a geographically diverse set of locations. FV@W and our network has shaped the debates around Earned Sick Days (ESD) and Family and Medical Leave Insurance (FMLI), engaged a wide range of partners, and guided development of the most inclusive policies to date.

As an organization and a movement, we recognize that time to care is a jobs issue, as well as a key to economic self-sufficiency and to well-being for children, families and seniors. The COVID pandemic highlights the needs we've already seen in supporting workers and their families, particularly as women leave the workforce in record numbers to care for their children.

Too many Connecticut workers have not had access to a single sick day throughout the COVID pandemic due to exemptions from the state's law or from the federal Families First Coronavirus Response Act. The workers least likely to have access to paid sick days are those on the frontlines of this pandemic, including the women and people of color who make up the majority of domestic workers and essential workers.

When workers without paid sick days face illness, they must choose between caring for themselves and those they love or keeping their job. The decision they make ripples out beyond any one person or family, especially in a pandemic. Pressuring employees to work through illnesses without adequate time to recover causes productivity losses for businesses¹ and health consequences for workers.² Conversely, access to paid sick days during the pandemic flattened the curve of COVID-19

¹ Zoe Ziliak Michel, The Business Benefits of Paid Sick Days in Maryland (Jan. 13, 2017). Available at: <https://www.clasp.org/sites/default/files/publications/2017/04/The-Business-Benefits-of-Paid-Sick-Days-in-Maryland-final.pdf>.

² Dana Wilkie, 9 in 10 Workers Admit Going to Work Sick (Nov. 7, 2019). Available at: <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/employee-relations/pages/coming-to-work-sick-.aspx>.

transmissions and reduced COVID-19 cases in certain areas by 400 cases per day.³ Access to paid sick days remains a top challenge in receiving the COVID vaccine - ensuring all CT workers have access to paid sick days would greatly help workers receive the vaccine and have time to recover.

In 2011, Connecticut became the first state (other than Washington, DC) to pass a paid sick days law. However, this law excluded many workers, including those most in need of paid sick days. Workers in businesses with fewer than 50 employees, those employed in certain types of organizations, and temporary and day laborers were all exempted from the initial policy. The 2011 legislation also prevented workers from using their paid sick time to care for anyone other than themselves, their child under 18, or their spouse (defined as a husband or wife). This description of family leaves out siblings, parents and grandparents, older children, and many other people for whom the worker might need to care.

Connecticut's original paid sick days law left far too many Connecticut workers without access to paid sick time. In the ten years since Connecticut's law passed, nearly 20 million workers across the country gained access to paid sick and safe days to care for themselves and those they love.

S.B. 312 brings Connecticut up to date with more recent laws by:

- removing the employee size and job classification from paid sick days legislation
- allowing workers to use the paid sick days they've accrued immediately
- including care for all people that a worker considers family
- providing pandemic related sick time and COVID specific leave

We greatly appreciate the state's willingness to update the paid sick days law to benefit more workers and businesses. We hope the Committee and all lawmakers will vote favorably this year to strengthen Connecticut's paid sick days law, and we stand ready to answer additional questions or help in any way that we can.

Josephine Kalipeni
Executive Director, Family Values @ Work

³ Stefan Pichler, Katherine Wen, and Nicolas R. Ziebarth, COVID-19 Emergency Sick Leave Has Helped Flatten The Curve In The United States (October 15, 2022). Available at <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/abs/10.1377/hlthaff.2020.00863>